

Video games as source of learning and upkeeping the English language skills: Final Fantasy XIV
players' point of view

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Abstract

Throughout the years gaming has become increasingly more popular and because of that the researchers have started to notice its beneficial effects in English language learning: the more people look into the topic, the more they find pointers that reveal the importance of gaming in learning for especially the younger generation. This study discusses the connection between gaming and English language learning and upkeep of the skills from the Final Fantasy XIV players' point of view. Six participants were interviewed about their connections with gaming and how games have affected their English language learning and how game to this day are a part of the upkeep of the language. The purpose of this study is to gain understanding on how gaming has improved the participants' English skills and furthermore upkeep the already learned language, while figuring out if there would be a way to implement gaming like environment into the current education system.

The results reveal that most of the participants felt like they did not learn much from the formal education side compared to other sources like books and films. Biggest issue seemed to be the lack of interaction with other people. None of them felt like the school succeeded in teaching the oral conversations and general interaction was lacking without the support from their gaming hobby where the participants used English daily. All of the participants also think that the current educational system could benefit from gaming like environment for learning.

Tiivistelmä

Vuosien saatossa pelien pelaamisesta on tullut yhä suositumpaa ja tämän takia tutkijat ovat alkaneet huomata pelaamisen myönteisiä vaikutuksia englannin kielen oppimisessa: mitä enemmän aihetta tutkitaan, sitä enemmän löydetään viitteitä siitä, että pelaaminen on merkittävä osa etenkin nuoren sukupolven oppimista. Tämä tutkimus käsittelee pelaamisen ja englannin kielen oppimisen yhteyttä ja kielen osaamisen ylläpitoa Final Fantasy XIV -pelaajien näkökulmasta. Kuutta osallistujaa haastateltiin heidän ajatuksistaan pelaamiseen liittyen ja siitä kuinka pelit ovat parantaneet osallistujien englannin kielen taitoa ja lisäksi myös kuinka pelit ovat ylläpitäneet jo opittua kieltä. Tavoitteena oli samalla löytää vastaus kysymykseen voisiko pelipohjaista oppiympäristöä soveltaa nykyiseen koulutusjärjestelmään.

Tulokset osoittavat, että osallistujat eivät kokeneet oppineensa koulussa juuri mitään verrattuna muihin oppimisen lähteisiin, kuten kirjoihin ja elokuvaan. Suurin ongelma kaikkien osallistujien mielestä tuntui olevan vuorovaikutuksen puute. Kukaan heistä ei kokenut, että koulujärjestelmä olisi onnistunut suullisen keskustelun ja kanssakäymisen opettamisessa. Yleinen vuorovaikutuspuuttui täysin ilman heidän peliharrastuksensa tukea, jossa osallistujat käyttivät englantia päivittäin. Kaikki osallistujat olivat myös sitä mieltä, että nykyinen koulujärjestelmä voisi hyötyä pelien pelaamiseen perustuvasta oppimisympäristöstä.

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1. Introduction

With the endlessly developing technology around us, we become increasingly reliant on the new ways of learning and consuming information. All of the information is within the arm's reach on our phones and computers, and we can connect to people all over the world at all times. Learning languages has also become easier with all of these tools within our reach and playing video games is one of the big sources of learning foreign language alongside of other media sources like music and television. Video games used to be seen as violent and as a waste of time by the general folk and it was not really looked into seriously, but during the recent years more and more researchers have turned their gaze towards the beneficial side of this intriguing but time-consuming hobby.

Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) discuss how motivation is one of the key factors of language learning. They furthermore elaborate that when individual is voluntarily taking part of gaming environment that uses foreign language as its base, it motivates the individual to learn the language to “survive” or immerse in the game. This sort of motivation could also be implemented in the formal education system in the form of games. This is where the importance of figuring out how to implement these newfound ways of learning into the current formal education comes into light. Throughout the years Finnish education system has been taking the course towards more technology driven system, especially in the upper secondary school area of studies. The matriculation examinations slowly moved to online from the traditional pen and paper (Kosola, 2016) and in 2019 all of the exams were conducted online. And this kind of changes makes one wonder whether it could be possible to implement game environment learning into the education.

Six individuals were interviewed about their experiences on the usefulness of learning English from video games. The study discusses their personal experiences and thoughts on the topic, and also goes into detail about their personal background on learning English in school in comparison to other sources; mainly focusing only on the gaming aspect.

The purpose and goal of this study is to gain understanding on how gaming has improved the participants' English skills and furthermore upkeep the already learned language. A side goal for the study was to figure out if there could possibly be a way to implement gaming into the formal education system and if the participants would have any suggestions regarding that matter, and if that in their opinion would be beneficial for the education system at all. Another interesting point in the study is to see if the participants can differentiate in between the different ways, they have learned English, and if they can tell the difference in between what they learned

from where. How did the participants learn English and how big impact gaming had especially in the early education and furthermore with upkeeping their language skills? Do the participants think that gaming should be implemented into the formal education? These are the main questions discussed in this research.

2. Theoretical framework

This section presents previous research conducted about video games and learning. The main goal is to examine what has already been studied in this specific field. The discussion section of the thesis will then compare these previous studies to the findings of the thesis.

Throughout the recent decade playing video games has increasingly become popular within all age groups, but people seem to start getting into gaming even younger because of how important part of their lives all electronic devices have become. A lot of the youngsters of our time have their own phones and some play console or computer games on their free time. The more time they spend on their devices, the more apparent the presence of English becomes in their lives. With the constant development in technology, we have reached point in life where video games are extremely photorealistic 3D gameworlds with high-quality orchestral music and sound-effects companied by professional, sometimes immersive voice-action. Not only has the technology advanced, but also the ways that the video games tell the stories. Games nowadays include very current topics and problems, sometimes portrayed in fantasy setup, but the stories can dive into very deep topics that raise conversation.

Not all games are translated to the native language of the player, which means that most commonly the players require some form of English knowledge to be able to proceed and play, and also to be able to understand what is happening on their screens. Recent studies have shown that playing video games is beneficial for learning and that there is correlation between the gaming hobby and getting better English grades at school (Uuskoski, 2011). The study made by Uuskoski states that there is undeniable connection between good grades and playing games, but that it is impossible to prove that the higher grades achieved by the gamers are entirely due to playing games.

Another study conducted for young children in Denmark (Jensen, 2017) further proves that students that play games have significant improvement in their vocabulary tests. The study mentions that “Gaming may play a role in vocabulary learning is perhaps not surprising as the gamer is motivated to understand the input”. Games can work as motivators for language learning because they offer different way to approach language learning and the students are likely more motivated to do something that they enjoy working on passively, rather than forcing information in school teaching setting.

The study by Wang, Petrina, and Feng, (2017) goes into detail about how 3D virtual worlds are promising for immersive learning in English as foreign language. Learning English as foreign language usually focuses on vocabularies, grammar, and pragmatic features without contextual immersion which motivates the students to use the language rather than to analyze or translate it. As a side note for a lot of foreign language learners the lack of language upkeep might cause major problems with further learning because they never get to use the skills that they have acquired in the formal education, immersive environment can provide form of upkeep especially if the immersive world includes conversating or interacting with others. Their study about the 3D immersive virtual world is based on investigating students play and interact in virtual world called VILLAGE that was developed on server in HWL Research lab with OpenSimulator. Their study further proved that learning environment like this can significantly aid with learning English, and especially the upkeep of the learned language. Immersive gameworlds help the students that do not only learn from reading books, but by actually putting their skills into test in real-life situations or simulated platforms that allow them to practice those skills.

3. Methodology and data

The data for this study was collected by conducting a qualitative semi-structured interview over the internet through chat and voice communication with six individuals who classify themselves as gamers and they all play MMORPG¹ game called Final Fantasy XIV online developed by Square Enix. The participants were asked personally if they would like to take part in the study. This section talks more about the participants and goes into detail about the interviews conducted and elaborates what Final Fantasy XIV is.

3.1. Participants

Six individuals were chosen to be part of the study, all of whom are young adults aged from 20 to 29 years old. The participants come from different countries: two of them are from Germany, one from Russia, one from Finland, one from South Africa and one from the United Kingdom. Four of the participants have learned English as foreign language whereas two of the participants speak English as their native language. Having native speakers answer the same questions given to the non-native speakers added versatility to the study. The participants have long background in gaming and some of them have even played video games for decades. Most of them said that they have either always played games in English or got into playing games that are in English very early onto their gaming career.

All of the participants are active players of the game Final Fantasy XIV, which being online game, involves a lot of interaction with other players and a lot of possibilities to interact with the English language itself. All of the participants being active players, have finished the Shadowbringers expansion story of the game by either reading through it or by skipping the story cutscenes, and are part of an active community including players from all around the world.

3.2. Final Fantasy XIV

The critically acclaimed Final Fantasy XIV also known as FFXIV is MMORPG game that has very versatile game system allowing the players to interact and communicate with each other. The game itself has language options for Japanese, English, French and German, of which you can choose to have the game audio in any of these languages paired with any subtitles of these four options. The game itself has elaborate story with characters that in the English version use

¹ Massively multiplayer online role-playing game – an online role-playing video game in which a very large number of people participate in the game simultaneously.

different accents and dialects of English, some of the NPC's² have distinguished Scottish way of speaking in the regional game area of Limsa Lominsa, and especially a character called Urianger speaks in a very old form of English with word examples like “thou”, “thinketh” and “thee” challenging the player to try to understand his purposefully complicated and almost poetic dialogue.

The game is very reliant on the players to interact with each other to be able to continue in the story by finishing dungeons and other tasks on the way, so the players get to interact and use their language skills on daily basis when engaging with the game. The game story builds up to finishing up quests and reading through dialogue and getting immersed into the game as the playable character of the game into the story. Because the originally Japanese game is only translated to English, French and German, not everyone can choose their native language which leads them to use the English option, making it the perfect place to learn and upkeep their language skills.

The participants of the research play the game almost daily and if not, at least weekly, and all of them participate in different aspects of the game. Some raid, some are more into the story and maybe even further theory-crafting, making backgrounds and own lore for their characters is fairly common amongst the players of the game and some even write fanfiction based on the story itself or their own backstories which then include some of the game elements or NPC's. For some the game is extremely important social aspect for their lives: they log in the fantasy world to talk and enjoy time with other people either by doing the playable content together, or just hanging out writing with each other in the game chat or over voice calls, some would even call it their only social interaction outside of their day-to-day life.

3.3. Interviews

All of the interviews were conducted in an online environment and five of them were over a voice call and one over text chat. All of the interviews were recorded in written form by the researcher and the voice calls were also recorded in audio form and the text interview was saved by taking screenshots of the conversation between the participant and the researcher. The participants were asked 18 base questions which were further elaborated with some follow up questions depending on the answers that the participants gave which helped to expand more on the topic and helped to gain better understanding on each participants' personal experiences. The

² Non-player character or non-playable character, meaning that it is character in the game that the player cannot control.

participants focused mainly on answering the questions given, but majority of them lead into more in-depth conversations because of the broadness of the subject.

The questions had two main categories: education and gaming. On the education part the participants were asked to specify their background on education and their opinions on the formal English teaching in their country and if they feel like the schooling system could benefit from using gaming environment as teaching method of some sort. The gaming side of the interview focused on mainly how the participants have learned English from the games they have played and how big of an impact they think it has had on their English learning and furthermore upkeeping their English language skills. There were few questions that tied these categories together very tightly because of some overlapping and some of the questions made the participants go back and forth with the answers they had given to previous questions. The main focus was on finding out the relation between gaming and learning and upkeeping the English language skills for each participant.

The research method used was qualitative semi-structured interview on the participants. The research follows the very simplified guideline (Cohen, 2006), and the nature of the method allows the researcher to prepare the baseline questions ahead of time and gives more freedom to the participants with expressing themselves through their answers. Since semi-structured studies allow the researcher, and the participants go into further detail on the topics rather than sticking only to the specific questions, it engages more in-depth conversations with each individual participant. Semi-structured interviews can provide reliable qualitative data, that can also be compared to other similar studies on the case.

3.4. Research ethics

All of the participants were informed about their rights regarding the study in a privacy notice, which included the base information of the study to be conducted and all the information about the collection and storing and furthermore destroying of the data. The notice also included the contact information of the person conducting the study. The study data was recorded in audio, written and photo form. All of the participants gave their consent to the study after reading the privacy notice by signing a separate consent form. The consent forms and the data recorded in the interviews were stored in separate places protected by passwords, and only the person conducting the study had access to these files. The data collected and recorded will be destroyed after the researcher has successfully completed their thesis or eventually obtained their university degree.

4. Analysis

This section focuses on summarizing the information gathered in the interviews by going into detail about the answers given by the participants and elaborating the conversations had with each individual. The interview questions were mostly put into two categories: education and gaming and few questions that intertwined these two categories by asking similar questions in relation to one another. After the general information questions about the participants' age and residence, the first part of the interview focused on the formal education section asking questions about the participants' background in English language studies and their personal experiences of the English education in their countries. This section also went into detail about their personal experiences on how they have learned English through gaming and other medias, and if they can draw a line in between what they have learned from each specific category of learning. The latter part of the interview focused mainly on the background on gaming and the benefits of which the participants feel like gaming brought into their English language learning and the upkeep of their language skills. And also, some conversation and examples on how Final Fantasy XIV has affected their language upkeep. Many of the participants mentioned that the questions made them think a lot deeper than they have previously thought about how they ended up learning English. The first four questions were more personal ones related to English usage overall, but they tie into the two categories presented. Some of the questions that were more aimed towards the foreign language learners, were suitably adjusted to work for the native speakers with similar outcome on the answer from both the natives and the foreign language users. For example, when asked whether the participant prefers to use their native language or if they rather use English, the question was changed into if they prefer using English or if they would rather use another language instead.

4.1. Background

The start of the interview included few more personal questions in which the participants told where they are from and how old they are. They were also asked how often they use English in their day-to-day life and if they prefer using their native language over English or the other way around.

All of the participants answered that they use English every day in their day-to-day life, but most of them only use English daily online rather than out in public, with the exception of the native speakers who speak the language in 'real life' too, but they wanted to underline the fact that their daily interactions happen mostly online. The native speaker from United Kingdom said that "I obviously and unfortunately use English and would rather prefer using foreign

language in my day-to-day life”. The rest of the participants said either that they do not really mind which one they are using as long as the point gets across and one participant said that they prefer using English because they do not like the sound of their native language and English feels more natural for them to use.

4.2. Formal education

The participants were asked about their background in English studies, how the English studies were when they were at the school, and also how long they studied English for. This section included a lot of their personal opinions and experiences with the formal education in their countries and if they had any negative or positive experiences regarding the teaching or learning in general.

The number of years the participants studied English for varies from 5 to 12 years and the native speakers studied everything in English from the start to end of their formal education. Two of the participants stated that they mostly learned English outside of school rather than by participating in class for either due skipping school for personal reasons or because their teacher was not the greatest towards the students or the education system was lacking in general for providing the necessities for the learning. For them the formal education offered next to nothing towards their English language learning, and they were primarily focusing on other sources like media, books, and games to fill the gap left by the lack of proper teaching in the subject. The rest of the participants mentioned that they did rather good at school with their English studies because they felt like they were constantly ahead with their vocabulary and skills because of the knowledge they had attained through playing games or other media.

Nearly all of the participants felt like the teaching at school was extremely boring or alternatively the tasks given were way too easy for them personally meaning it did not challenge them at all, at least in ways that would have been beneficial for their learning and the skills in interacting with using the language. For example, the participant from Finland said that “Studying English was boring and mostly something I already knew, so it was really tedious thing to do. Obviously, it was nice to learn something new, but most of the time it (the pace) felt way too slow”. Few of the participants felt like they were learning more from other sources rather than by sitting in the classroom ‘banging their head against the wall’ with repetitive tasks because the education system does not offer many alternatives for learning which could benefit the students that do not learn the so called ‘usual’ way. Seemingly the formal English education lacked the variability in teaching methods at least when the participants were at school learning it.

While most of the participants learning English as their foreign language mention that the thing that they got taught most was grammar, the native participant from United Kingdom tells that for them the teaching of grammar in United Kingdom has become undeniably lazy in comparison to the people that have to learn the language as non-native speaker. It is rather surprising to end up in a situation where the foreign learners use more proper grammar than the native speakers of the language. The non-native participants felt like their teachers spoke too much in their corresponding native language rather than in English during the classes and the lessons did not properly engage any form of interaction in English between the students either, meaning that the oral skills of the students were not properly taught at schools, and similarly to this if the native speakers wanted to learn a foreign language, their teachers did not essentially teach in the language either. The lack of the oral interaction for most meant that they would have not been using the oral skill of the language almost at all if they did not have alternative way of learning to speak or to upkeep the skills, they needed to be able to talk the language properly.

When asked about the participants opinions and thoughts about the formal English education in their countries, most of them said that at least during their times the teaching was not great. Some said that it was okay, but as mentioned before by the native speaker, the teaching was lazy, and the rest agreed it to be lacking one way or another. The native speakers pointed out the class differences as well: in the United Kingdom the private schools have better teaching than the public schools and similarly in South Africa the richer schools provide better education compared to the poorer areas.

4.3. Gaming and its benefits

The gaming section of the interview started off with the background question of how long the participants have been playing games and what kind of games they prefer to play and then going into depth about how gaming has been aiding and helping the participants with learning English throughout the years and also how they have been upkeeping their skills through playing games. The participants have all been playing games for over 10 years, some even over 20 years and have wide variety of different types of games on their list of games they have played. Most of the participants started to play games very early into their lives which in many of their cases meant that the games were not translated to their native language, forcing them to play the game in English, and to be able to play and understand, they had to know the language to some degree. The participants said that they play both multiplayer and single player games, but some preferred one over the other and that both of them have their benefits towards the learning of language. Single players however lack the social side of learning by the interactions with other players that

the multiplayer games have. Single players might have more story aspects to them which requires different skills from vocabulary to overall understanding of the language, or otherwise challenging tasks that push the player to figure out things in order to be able to play.

Most of the participants said they like wide variety of genres in games, but a lot of them enjoy story-driven games that have a plot, which also motivates to learn the language you are playing the game in to be able to relate and immerse to the plot.

The social aspect of the multiplayer games was very important to a lot of the participants and one of them described their preferences with saying “Social interaction of multiplayer games in something I like, I do not really like single players because it takes so much personal time and with multiplayer you always have people around so you do not notice the time pass by”, and continued with “I prefer competitive environments over casual ones, because I constantly want to improve myself”. The social and competitive nature of the multiplayer games is overall what the participants thought important and also as big aspect of their learning journeys in the English language. Being able to express themselves and talk almost daily with other people in online games broadened their vocabulary and also helped with upkeeping their already learned skills. When you are using a language on daily basis, you start to get more used to it and slowly getting better by absorbing the language from the other players as well, and since for example the MMORPGs are extremely populated by people from all over the world the interactions the players have are very versatile.

The social aspect can be either written or spoken conversation. The written conversations when it come to games usually happen within the game realm through the in-game chat. Oral conversations usually happen through some form of VoIP³, nowadays one the most used voice call service is application called Discord, which allows its users next to the normal messaging and calling to form ‘servers’ where they can write and talk with multiple other people at the same time. Many Final Fantasy XIV free companies⁴ have their own Discord servers for the people to connect and converse with each other outside of the game as well. Services like Discord are used by the players to be able to talk orally without having to stop what they are doing in the game in order to communicate.

The participants were asked if they interact with people in English while they are playing games, and everyone said yes. The follow-up question for this was whether they use written or

³ Voice over Internet Protocol which means a proven technology that lets anyone place phone calls over an internet connection.

⁴ Free company or FC essentially means a guild in Final Fantasy XIV – essentially group of people that are in the same group within the game and play together.

spoken language to communicate, or if they use both. All of the participants said that they are confident with using written language in the games they play and most said that they have no issues with using spoken language either. One of the participants said that they usually shy away from speaking orally because of the fear of bullying due the fact that is what happened in school when they were trying to learn spoken English. Both of the German participants said that they use English almost exclusively in the games they play even if they know other German players and interact with them. One of them stated that “I highly prefer voice over text chat. I almost exclusively speak in English even around with the German people that I know”. This shows that even if the game is translated to German, some of the players exclusively prefer to communicate in English sometimes for personal reasons and sometimes to be able to upkeep their skills in the English language since they barely get to use it in the daily life.

The participants were next asked if gaming has made them more confident with their English written and spoken usage. All but one of the participants said yes and had a lot of positive examples of how speaking and writing, but especially speaking while playing games has made them more confident with their usage of English. Few of the positive examples included “If it was not for gaming, I would probably not dare to speak English to anyone anywhere” and “Yes, I used to have a really bad stutter, but it has gotten a lot better through gaming and doing callouts⁵ and just overall talking more”. During the conversations few of the participants also pointed out that usually as long as people are getting their point across, no one really cares if people are writing or speaking proper English or not, making it a lot more comfortable to interact and converse with others without the pressure of being judged.

While talking about the confidence boost gaming has given the participants, they were also asked if gaming motivated them to learn English and in what ways. The most common answer throughout the participants was that they were motivated by gaming because they wanted to understand what they were playing and especially if the game they were playing had significant storyline they were interested in. The participant from the United Kingdom said that even for native speaker games have been big reason in why they have continued to expand and define their vocabulary: whenever they encounter new words, they look into the meanings and how they work in the context. According to one participant gaming provided them interesting and fun environment for learning English, where they could learn on their own without having to deal with the receptiveness of the formal education.

⁵ Callouts here mean being ‘raid lead’ and helping other out with doing voice commands. Raid lead is a person who leads group of people in MMORPG content and helps them out with calling out mechanics for them.

Furthermore, the participants were asked how gaming has helped them to learn English and to upkeep their English language skills, and what kinds of things have they learned. All of the participants agreed that gaming has remarkably helped them with learning English and most importantly they are able to upkeep their skills by constantly interacting and passively learning. As for the things they have learned through gaming most of them mentioned vocabulary. Because there is wide variety of different kinds of games, the vocabularies most definitely include words that do not often get used in daily life. One of the participants mention that “Gaming has helped by just showing the context just by what the characters do, which made understanding the words easier”, and the other participants had similar opinions about the importance of the contextual clues in games working in their favor. Few of them said that it has taught them to try to figure out what the word means from the rest of the context, and if they are not sure about the meaning, they go to a dictionary to check, which through the context is easier to remember for the next time. One of the native speakers point that for them gaming has worked as teacher in how to speak a little bit slower and more descriptive way, also to not use slang or unnecessarily complicated words when communicating with other people in the games.

During this part the importance of social aspect surfaced again intertwining their answers to the previous conversations about the importance of interaction. All of the participants mention that they feel like the biggest impact on how they have learned and upkeep their English skills is through actively participating in conversations with other players in the game chat or over voice. They all said that the nearly daily interactions in English have made their English much more consistent and structured, and it has also helped them to learn new slang and about other cultures through the other players.

4.4. Impact of Final Fantasy XIV

Because the participants are players of Final Fantasy XIV, all of them have experiences on how this MMORPG has specially affected their learning and upkeeping of English language. Most of it is heavily tied to the experiences they have about gaming overall, but there are few pointers that lift FFXIV specifically on the pedestal. One of the participants said that especially the character Urianger has left impact on them: “I want to be good enough to understand Urianger’s dialogue because of his usage of the old English, and I have given myself special goal to learn the words and idioms he is using”. Other participants mention the story as a huge motivator to understand what all of the meanings behind the words are. The story world of FFXIV is complex and multilayered, so some words and sentences might not first make sense without looking further into the meanings and the context in which they are said in.

Interaction and socializing are important in the online world of FFXIV. Advancing the story and tackling the quests require relatively good skills in English so the players do not get stuck. Conversating in the game itself is made easy through the chat functions and the participants said that interacting with people is extremely important for their personal skill upkeep in the game. Free companies and their Discord servers make communicating easier. Most of the participants raid⁶ and use voice chat to communicate with the other players in their statics⁷ and give voice callouts to each other in order to clear the content. One participant told that raiding in particular has helped them to get better in reacting and putting words out quickly in understandable way in the fast paced, stressful fights.

4.5. Implementing gaming into formal education

One of the questions that the participants were asked was if they think that the formal education could benefit from game like learning environment, and why they think the way they do about the topic. All of the participants said that the formal education could benefit from game like environment but had some struggles with trying to figure out what kind of game it could possibly be. Few suggested vocabulary games or games that have actual story to them, some referenced MMORPG kind of game but realized that it is rather hard to implement that kind of environment into formal education. For story game few participants suggested using visual novel⁸ that could have educational base and teach the students through contextual clues. Visual novels are often story heavy and sometimes include immersive dialogue options where the player can choose their answer from. One participant felt like Minecraft type of game could work where the players would have to collect and craft items in order to proceed in the game, maybe somehow implementing vocabulary tasks into the game and crafting.

The native speaker participant from United Kingdom suggested Dark Souls type of game. Dark Souls is essentially game where the player explores the surrounding areas, and they have to do so with caution in order to proceed forward with learning from their mistakes. The basic idea of Dark Souls is that if you fail, you will need to start over and make your way to the place where you failed again and again, until you eventually beat the game. The participant felt like this sort of trial and error could work for students to aid with learning if someone could figure out how to implement vocabulary or other content to this type of game environment.

⁶ Raid (verb) – participating in harder boss fight content most commonly in MMORPGs.

⁷ Static – group of 8 people that do the harder content together.

⁸ Visual novel – interactive fiction video game genre that includes text-based story with static or sprite-based visuals.

One participant underlined the importance of the type of the game it would need to be for it to actually work in the formal education context. They felt like not every game is suitable for the learning environment and said that “Obviously rock paper scissors would not work for teaching”. For them the immersion and contextual cues were the most important things to keep in mind if one would want to insert game like learning environment into the formal education system.

4.6. Gaming versus formal education

The participants were asked if they can differentiate in between what they have learned in school and what they learned from gaming when it comes to English language, followed by question about if they could draw specific line in between what they learned from gaming and what they learned from other media like films or books. Nearly all of the participants could immediately point out what they learned from formal education and what from elsewhere. Most of them mentioned that they learned grammar and words without context at school whereas they learned more vocabulary with the context from games. Few of them said that they felt like school did not offer much because they were all the time ahead and knew the things that they were being taught already because they had learned them from elsewhere beforehand. Drawing the line in between the gaming and other media was harder for the participants, since all the sources intertwine with each other, especially looking back and not being able to fully remember where they have learned and what.

The last question of the interview was if the participants prefer learning from games over the formal education. This question had rather interesting reactions from the participants: most of them had their answer ready without a second guess, but few took their time to answer. Most of the participants went for answers like ‘Absolutely yes’ and ‘Gaming for sure’ because of the lack of motivation and challenge in school learning, but one of them pointed out after a while that even though they prefer gaming themselves, if the English teacher in school is good and into what they are doing, you likely learn faster and better than by learning passively on your own. One participant says that they would not understand nor speak English as well as they do if they did not play games, also stating that educational system needs some sort of change in order to offer different way of doing things because the ‘whack your head into a wall until you learn’ does not work for all students.

5. Discussion

Looking into the analysis the results are quite apparent. For the participants gaming has been remarkable aid in their language learning and especially in the current upkeep of their skills and maybe even further defining those skills. According to them, gaming has helped them to attain knowledge and help them in their studies and learning, possibly also meaning that it had impact on their school grades like the study by Uuskoski (2011) also came across with.

Similarly, looking into the VILLAGE -study (Feng, Petrina & Wang, 2017) results and them finding out that the immersive virtual reality offered beneficial results for the students that had tendency to enjoy the immersion of the game, the participants of this research mentioned how important the contextual and immersive qualities are for language learning.

Overall, the participants felt like the formal English education could benefit from the game like of environment and they had good suggestions of possible ways to work it into our existing education system. Going forward it would be important to try to figure out if it is possible to implement this type of studying without having to rework the entire education base to support the new ways of teaching. However, considering the constantly developing technology, it is likely that the governments and schools have to rework their teaching methods anyway in the near future if we keep advancing further with our technology.

Plenty of researchers have as of late had their gaze on the same topic regarding the importance of gaming and learning from the games, and how the schools could possibly benefit from having some form of gaming implemented in the system. While looking into other research of the topic, it was apparent that something needs to happen to the formal education.

The interviews could have had more in-depth conversation about the participant's opinions on if they care about being grammatically correct or not. Similarly, the questions lacked their self-evaluation on their skill level in English, that could be beneficial information for future studies on the topic of learning from games.

One of the biggest findings in this research was the fact how much every individual participant was underlining the importance of the interaction with other people, especially in the spoken language. Looking back into all of their responses to the questions there is apparent lack of interaction in English during school years. It seems like schools either skip on the oral conversations, or skim over it too briefly. Teachers should be teaching in English, rather than mainly using their native language to converse with the students. The right direction to take here would probably be to figure out how to get more interaction in English in between the

teachers and students, and also between the students in schools, in a way that no one gets judged or without it being awkward for the students. All of the research participants agreed on the importance of social aspect and being able to constantly use and upkeep their skills through talking and writing, how could this be implemented in school environment?

6. Conclusion

To summarize the research participants all felt that gaming had been extremely important in learning English language and upkeeping their skills. Despite being from different countries and from somewhat different age groups, the answers were surprisingly similar to one another. It could be just that because the interview was conducted on likeminded gamers that all have ended up playing Final Fantasy XIV, or then we are onto something deeper. Most surprising results were that the native speakers had sometimes almost identical answers to the foreign language learner participants answers, for example the lack of oral conversation on foreign language classes. Obviously, the native speakers could not answer to that question with experiences with English, but they had experiences on learning other languages.

The biggest part of the interview was the conversations about interactions in English. Every participant ranked the interactions that happen in English the most important way of learning and upkeeping the language skills. The conversation kept going back and forth in between the different questions and they always returned to the social aspect and interactions. Even though the number of participants does not give idea on the larger scale, it seems to be apparent that something needs to be done to the teaching of English and maybe teaching in general. Most of the participants felt like the stage that the learning and teaching was when they were back in school was not on a level where it should have been. This research is completely tied to the opinion of 20-29 years old participants that are not in the current education system, nor aware how much the schools have improved or if it is still as bad as they remember it being, but the general understanding on the topic is that not much has changed in the schools.

Future research could be conducted on implementing games into school environments, especially for the younger students that could benefit from the versatile ways of learning. This could likely require big changes and investments by governments and schools to make the change happen if they are not fully equipped with proper tools for online education or building such game like environments. Most importantly the lack of interaction and oral conversations in schools should be looked into, that kind of change should not be unattainable even with the current educational system that we have.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

- Where are you from?
- How old are you?
- How often do you use English in your day-to-day-life?
- Do you prefer using your native language or do you prefer using English?
- How were your English studies in school? How long did you study?
- Can you differentiate in between what you learned in school and what you learned by gaming when it comes to English language?
- Can you draw specific line in between what you learned from gaming and what from other media like films or books?
- Your thoughts on formal English education in your country?
- Do you think that current teaching methods in formal education could be aided by game like environment for learning? – If yes, what kind of game could that be? (e.g., vocabulary memory game, actual game with English sentences/questions, games between students)
- How long have you been playing games?
- Did gaming motivate you to learn English? – If yes, in what ways?
- What kind of games do you prefer? (e.g., genre, multiplayer/single player, etc.)
- Do you interact with people in English when you are playing? – If yes, do you use written and/or do you use voice for spoken language?
- Has gaming made you more confident with your English usage? (Written and spoken)
- How has gaming helped you to learn English and to upkeep your English language skills?
- What aspects in gaming do you think helps the most with language learning?
- What kind of things have you learned through gaming? (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, slang, etc.)
- Do you prefer learning English from games over formal education?

These questions were the base for the interviews and few more elaborating questions were asked to expand on answers given.